A

SERMON

PREACH'D

In the CATHEDRAL-CHURCH

AT

ELY.

July the 24th, 1698.

On Occasion of His Majesty's *Proclamation* against *Atheism*, and *Profaneness*, &c.

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A PREFACE.

THIS *Diſcourſe, had I been fond of its appearing in Print, had been more ſeaſonably Publiſh'd, when it was firſt brought forth, which was ſoon after the Iſſuing out* His Majeſty's Proclamation againſt Atheiſm and Profaneneſs. *Tho indeed, the ſuppreſſion hereof being a new recommended by the King in his late* Speech *to the farther Conſideration of this preſent Parliament affords no unfit Occaſion even now to the Publiſhing a Diſcourſe of this Nature. It was in truth Calculated for the City, where, ſome buſineſs calling me thither laſt Year, I had Friends, who I knew, would expect I ſhould give them a Sermon: And I might at the ſame time have prevail'd with ſome to deſire a Publication of it, that ſo it might have come abroad with the Advantage of being Publiſhed at their Requeſt and Importunity. But waving this, I brought it ſafe off to* Ely, *where I had an opportunity (and that but very accidental) of Preaching it again. All which I thought proper to be here mentioned, that nothing of it might appear to be levell'd principally againſt any of that Auditory, wherein it had the Honour to be deliver'd, the Lord Biſhop of* Ely *himſelf being preſent. Whoſe Memory (to which I thought fit to appeal by ſubmitting it to his Lordſhip's view before I would commit it to the Preſs) is both able and ready to juſtifie me, that there was nothing then*

Preach'd that is not here Printed, nor any thing here Printed (bating what you may find in the Margin) that was not then Preached. From whom if it had the good fortune to gain any Approbation, I am not much concern'd how many it diſpleas'd beſide: The good Opinion of ſo great and worthy a Perſon being ſufficient to clear it, among all that are indifferent and unbyaſs'd, from any unſeemly or indiſcreet Glances. Tho' for the ſake of ſeveral to whom I owe a very juſt reſpect, I could heartily wiſh it had appear'd *as* inoffenſive *as it was* really innocent. *And, to ſay truth, one Reaſon, that now brings it to open View, is the hope that it may upon Re-examination be acquitted of any unhandſome Reflections: to which Charge the firſt hearing did it ſeems, expoſe it. How juſtly, I now leave to thoſe, who then heard it, and all others, who ſhall be at the pains of reading it, to judge. For my own part, I know nothing herein mention'd that gave any Offence, which the Hiſtory, I am engaged in, did not ſo plainly ſuggeſt, that without it, I had been unjuſt to my Subject and left the Parallel imperfect.*

Whether it may prove any otherwiſe ſerviceable or not, I humbly leave to God Almighty's Bleſſing: Whom I at the ſame time call to Witneſs that the firſt Motive to the forming this Diſcourſe was the concern I had upon me to ſee and hear how Atheiſm *and* Blaſphemy *have diffus'd and ſpread themſelves throughout the Nation; and the cheating hopes I had conceived from* His Majeſty's Pious Proclamation, *that ſuch a Diſcountenancing all that are that way Guilty, which he himſelf has moſt graciouſly promiſed, would be the moſt effectual Means to reſtrain its Courſe. and put a ſtop to the Malignity of its Influence. Which that it may, I beſeech God, may be not only the earneſt deſire but hearty endeavour of all that would not undergo the ſuſpicion of* having an evil Will to *this our* Sion.

A

SERMON

Preach'd

In the Cathedral Church at *Ely*.

Jer. Vii. 17.

Seeſt thou not what they do in the Cities of Judah, *and in the Streets of* Jeruſalem?

WHEN *Solomon* ſays that *the Light of the Eyes rejoyceth the heart*, it can only be underſtood, where the Object is delightful: For ſuch a Proſpect as *Jeremiah* had, when he ſaw the Deſolation of *Jeruſalem*, *the Young and the Old lie on the ground in the ſtreets, the Virgins and young Men fallen by the Sword*; when he ſaw *the Children faint for hunger in the top of every ſtreet, all that had been ſwadled and brought up, conſumed by the Enemy*; when *the Lord ſlew them in the Day of his Anger, when he killed and pitied not, none eſcaped nor remained*; as we find it Pathetically deſcribed, *Lam.* 2. Surely ſuch a Proſpect as this could not but have ſo affected

Pro. 15. 30.

Lam. 2. 19. 21, 22.

his

his heart, as even to make him cry out in the Lan-
Jer. 20. 18. guage of the ſame Prophet, *wherefore came I forth out of the Womb to ſee labour and ſorrow?*

All which, if it were ſo afflicting to the Eye in the event, muſt needs be abundantly more ſo to ſee it likewiſe in its Cauſe, *viz.* The heigth of wickedneſs they were arrived at, that provoked God to this; the ſhameleſs and abominable Sins they were guilty of, as you ſee in the 9th and 10th Verſes of this Chapter, that *could Steal, Murder, commit Adultery, Swear falſely* and the like, and yet *come and ſtand before him in his Houſe, whereupon his Name is called, and ſay, we are delivered to do all theſe Abominations.* Such a careleſs and ſtupid ſecurity, that could from God's forbearance preſume upon peace and ſafety, notwithſtanding all the terrible examples of Vengeance that befell their Fore-fathers; which they are put in mind of in the next Verſe but one, to rowſe them, if it be poſſible, out of their deadly Lethargy, this dangerous Inſenſibility. *Go ye now,* ſays he, *unto my Place, that was in* Shiloh, *and behold what I did to that for the wickedneſs of my People, ver.* 12. And can theſe hope to eſcape their puniſhment, who are as deeply guilty of all their Sins? So many, that it were an endleſs thing to go about to enumerate or particularize them; ſo great that they are beyond all expreſſion; ſo evident and apparent, that it were but loſt labour to offer at any Proof of them: And therefore has God thought it enough in all reaſon to call upon the Prophets, or indeed any ones Eyes to be Witneſſes thereof. *Seeſt not thou what they do in the Cities of* Judah, *and in the Streets of* Jeruſalem? An aggravation far above

any

any Deſcription that could have been given of their doings.

For the handling of which words ſo as may be moſt ſuitable to my Deſign in chuſing them, I need but remove the Scene from *Jeruſalem and the Cities of Judah* to this Nation whereunto we belong, and imagine the Lord calling to us, as he did to his Prophet, to take a view of all the Wickedneſs and Profaneneſs the Debauchery and Immorality, the Atheiſm and Irreligion, that abound among us.

And this Call have I for my own part the more readily hearken'd to at preſent, ſince it has pleas'd Almighty God to put it into the heart of our pious *Sovereign* to conſider, that the Reformation of our Manners is the beſt return we can make for the happy and honourable Peace we are lately bleſt with: And that the vindicating of God's Honour from the many blaſphemous Aſperſions, wherewith the Atheiſm of this Age has endeavour'd to ſully it, is the moſt ſeaſonable Teſtimony of Gratitude for ſo ſignal a Mercy. Whoſe active Zeal in ſetting upon ſo noble an Undertaking has likewiſe ſtirred up an holy Emulation in his *Parliament* to joyn their helping hand, by contriving means to ſtem this Tide, and put a ſtop to that Inundation of Profaneneſs that has been a long time pouring in upon us. Which may, I hope, engage your Ears to entertain a Diſcourſe of this Nature with the more Attentiveneſs: All eſpecially among you, that have any regard for Religion, or indeed for the Publick ſafety, that mightily depends upon the Succeſs of their endeavours to hinder the ſpreading of this Contagion, which will otherwiſe moſt certainly bring down ſome heavy Judgment on

our Heads. That no Assistance therefore may be wanting to the furtherance of so glorious a Work, 'tis likewise highly deserving the Care, of not only *You*, who by your Stations have any Authority, but of *You*, also, who by the winning obligingness of your Carriage and Conversation have any Influence, over others: That so those, *who sit in the Seat of the Scornful*, and call all Religion only, Priest-craft, a Trade whereby *We* get our Living: That regard the Holy Scriptures but as a well laid Romance, and the great Articles of Christianity as nothing else but so many Fables: That look upon *our* Preaching to be mere Cant, our Doctrine of Heaven and Hell, of a Resurrection and a Judgment to come to be only a Trick to debar them the pleasure of Indulging their natural Appetites, and a bare Design to put a check upon their sensual desires and inclinations, which are very impatient of any controul: That even those, I say, that entertain such invincible Prejudices against *Our* Admonitions and Reproofs, may yet be wrought on by *You*, whom they are not so ready to suspect of any By designs upon them, to enter into parly with themselves, and consider and *see what it is they are doing*. And that you may be the better animated to curb the growth of these pernicious Impieties, that tend to the utter Ruin and Subversion of all Religion among us, thereby to prevent, what you can, the dreadful consequence hereof, even the Destruction and Over-throw of your Native Countrey (a Judgment God never fails to bring on a Land, when all his milder Methods are not able to reform it) I beseech you *now*, that you would enter with me into a serious Meditation on the words of my Text in these three following Particulars. *First*,

First, I desire that you would take a view with me of the wickedness the Prophet is here called upon to observe *in the Cities of* Judah *and in the Streets of* Jerusalem, and compare with that the abominable Principles and Practices, that at this day reign among us.

Secondly, That you would from the dreadful Effects of this their Wickedness consider, what we may justly expect should befall us, if we persist with our no less heinous Provocations to incense the Majesty of Heaven against us.

And *Thirdly*, How much it therefore concerns us both by our own Repentance and our best endeavours to reclaim others, to prevent those Judgments, which will otherwise most certainly overtake us.

To the First of These the very words of the Text directly lead us. The Second and Third do naturally arise from a due Consideration, whither those *Doings*, we are call'd upon to take notice of, most apparently tend.

And, First, Let us take a view of the Wickedness the Prophet is here call'd upon to observe *in the Cities of* Judah *and in the Streets of* Jerusalem, and compare with the same the abominable Principles and Practices, that at this day abound among us.

Their crying Sin, and that for which They had been often threatned with an utter Excision, was *Idolatry*. A Sin they were so strangely bewitch'd with, that notwithstanding God's continual Warnings against it, notwithstanding their miraculous Victories over the Nations God deliver'd into their hands on the account of this very Sin, they could not, upon being left never so little to themselves, forbear, ever

ever since their amazing Deliverance out of the Land
Judg. 2. 14. of *Egypt*. For which tho' *God often plagu'd them, and Sold them into the hands of their Enemies*, till they were duly humbled under a sense of it, yet were they seldom long settled in a State of prosperity, but *they had forgot him who had done so great things*
Ps. 106. 21. Deut. 32. 15. *for them*; they could not *grow fat*, but they must *kick*, become wanton and *and go a Whoring after o-*
Judg. 2. 17. Ps. 78. 58. *ther Gods*. All which God had as yet look'd upon but as so many *startings aside*, and so by some short
Old Transl. Affliction, some sudden Judgment giving them a check, he soon reduced them into the right Path. But now *they are quite gone out of the way, they are*
Ps. 14. 4. Old Transl. *altogether become abominable, there is none that doth good, no, not one.* You may see their present Condition described by two Prophets *Jeremiah* and *Ezekiel*, sent on purpose to warn them what they must expect upon their continuance in such daring and provoking Impieties.

For what the First of these discovers upon a survey of them, we need go no farther than this Chap-
Idolatry. ter of my Text. *They burn Incense to* Baal, *make*
v. 9. *Cakes to the Queen of Heaven, pour out Drink-Offe-*
— 18. *rings unto their Gods, build the High Places of* To-
— 31. phet *to burn their Sons and their Daughters in the*
Profane-ness. *Fire*; *set their abominations in the House, whereupon*
— 30. *God's Name is called, to pollute it.* All this is a sufficient manifestation of their Idolatry and Profaneness. And to shew you, how excessively corrupted
Immora-lity. they were in their Morals as well as their Worship, you may read in this same Chapter likewise, that
— 28. *Truth is perished and cut off from their Mouth*; *they*
— 5. *Steal, Murder, commit Adultery, Swear falsely*, as you

yon heard before. Nay, that which rendred their Condition the most desperate, was, that they rejected all the means God made use of to amend them. When he encourag'd them *to walk in all the ways which he commanded, that it might be well with them; they would not harken nor incline their Ear, but walked in the Counsels and in the Imaginations of their evil hearts. When he sent unto them his Servants, the Prophets, daily rising up early and sending them; Yet hearkned they not unto him, nor inclined their Ear, but hardned their neck and did worse than their Fathers.* Incorrigibleness. —23. —24. —25. —26.

Come we now to the Prophet *Ezekiel*, and we shall find God bespeaking him much after the same manner, as he does the Prophet *Jeremy* in my Text. *Seest thou what they do, even the great abominations that the House of* Israel *committed here? ch.* 8. *v.* 6. Their Idolatry in the first place. *None cast away the abominations of their Eyes, neither did they forsake the Idols of* Egypt, *ch.* 20. 8. *They made their Sons to pass through the Fire, and said we will be as the Heathen to serve Wood and Stone.* Their Profaneness next. *Thou hast despised mine Holy Things,* ch. 22. 8. *Her Priests have violated my Law, and have profaned my Holy Things, they have put no difference between the Holy and Profane,* v. 26. By which and what we find in other places of the same Prophet we may likewise discern the corruption of their manners. *They have changed my Judgments into Wickedness more than the Nations, they have refused my Judgments and my Statutes, they have not walked in them,* ch. 5. 6. Again, *ch.* 22. 7. *They have dealt by Oppression with the Stranger, have vexed* Idolatry. v. 31. —32. Profaneness. Immorality.

the

the Fatherleſs and Widow; have greedily gain'd of their Neighbours by extortion, v. 12. and v. before, *One hath committed Abomination with his Neighbour's Wife; another hath lewdly defiled his Daughter-in-Law, another has humbled his Siſter, his Father's Daughter.* And to ſhew you, in a word, out of this Prophet alſo, how little hope there was of their being reclaimed, we find the Lord telling him, ch. 3. 7. *The Houſe of* Iſrael *will not hearken unto Thee, for they will not harken unto Me; For all the Houſe* Iſrael *are impudent and hard hearted.* Thus have we *out of the Mouth of theſe two Witneſſes the truth* of all that is urged againſt them ſufficiently *eſtabliſhed*, and their guilt notoriouſly apparent.

Incorrigibleneſs.

Add now, that we may ſee how God, when once a People have filled up the meaſure of their Iniquities, and are ripe for Deſtruction, gives them over to a Spirit of Infatuation, ſuffering them to take ſuch Counſels and purſue ſuch Methods as muſt neceſſarily bring inevitable Ruin upon them: Let us look upon the fatal and immediate Cauſe of their Deſolation and Captivity; and we ſhall find this to be *Zedekiah*'s rebelling againſt the *King of Babylon* contrary to his Oath. Tho' he had ſworn Allegiance to *Nebuchadnezzer*, and particularly, that he would upon no account ſide with the *Egyptians*, yet in a little time truſting in their Ability to ſupport him, he enters into League with them; which brought the *King of Babylon* with a great Army againſt *Jeruſalem*. And, being ſtill flatter'd by thoſe about him, that his Allies the *Egyptians* would not only raiſe the Seige, but alſo give them ſuch a Defeat, that they ſhould not be able to come down any more againſt him; he was

Perjury.

prevailed

prevailed with to depend on these hopes, and *to trust in the shadow of* Egpyt, which *Isaiah* had formerly prophe- Ch. 30.
cied, *should be their Confusion*; *being but a broken Reed*, 3. 36, 6.
whereon if a Man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it; rather than he would hearken to *Jeremiah* or *Ezekiel*, who had now foretold, that it would prove no better.

To bring him to this insensibility of his danger, perhaps he might be wrought upon by the same Evil Counsellors to believe, their Prophecies were inconsistent one with another, and therefore, since both could not be true, there was little regard to be had to either: The one having Prophecied, that *his Eyes should behold the Eyes of the King of* Babylon, *and that he should speak with him Mouth to Mouth, and should go into* Babylon, *Jer.* 34. 3. and the other, *that he should not see it*, Ezek. 12. 13. This we find *Josephus* gives for the main reason of his slighting what they said. And indeed had the later Prophet said no more than this, both were compleatly verified in the Event; he being in his flight overtaken near *Jerico*, and brought before the *King of Babylon*, who, after he had accused him of perfidiousness, and upbraided him with Ingratitude in rebelling against him, who had advanc'd him, order'd his Sons to be slain before his Eyes; and then, that nothing might ever divert them after the horror of that dismal sight, or rather, that by a strange kind of Contradiction he might have it perpetually *before his Eyes* (the last Object we saw usually continuing more lively on the Imagination till something new offer it self to our view) he caus'd those very Eyes to be forthwith plucked out, and thus led him away Captive into *Babylon*: By which means the words of the Prophecy were exactly fulfilled, that he should never see it. Tho' I believe rather, they might possibly persuade him, that *Ezekiel* was inconsistent with him- Ant. Jud. Lib. 10. c. 9.

ſelf to talk of his dying in *Babylon* without living firſt to ſee it: Since 'tis plain he is expreſs enough, that *Zedekiah ſhould be carried into* Babylon, *and dye there*: As may be ſeen by the words immediately following in that Verſe above cited, and other places of the ſame Prophet. However, we find, what reaſon ſo e'er induced him to it, he was ſway'd more by *Hananiah*, of whom we have an Account, *Jer.* 28. and others about him, than by any thing theſe two Prophets offer'd to the contrary. Whereupon God abſolutely reſolves and confirms it with an Oath, that this very thing ſhould prove his overthrow. *As I live ſaith the Lord God, ſurely in the Place, where the King dwelleth, that made him King, whoſe Oath he deſpiſed, and whoſe Covenant he brake, even with him in the midſt of* Babylon *he ſhall dye*, Ezek. 17. 16. and again, v. 20. *I will bring him to* Babylon *and will plead with him there for his treſpaſs which he hath treſpaſſed againſt me.* By all which it appears, that, when a People or Nation perſiſt to provoke Almighty God by their continually repeated Tranſgreſſions, in Oppoſition to all the gracious Methods made uſe of by him to reclaim them, *he at length gives them over to ſtrong Deluſions, that they ſhould believe a lye, becauſe they received not Truth in the love of it; but, becauſe they deſired, did therefore believe* (for *quod volumus, facile credimus*) the contrary to be true rather than it. *The love of the Truth, that they might be ſaved. To whom as unto Children, that have not the uſe of Reaſon, he ſends a Judgment to mock them, that they, who would not be reformed by the Correction, wherein he dallied with them, might feel a Judgment worthy of God.*

2. Theſſ. 2. 10, 11.

Wiſd. 12. 25, 26.

And ſo I come to ſee in the next Place how far we have *Copied* after this *Original*, and to compare, with what is here diſcover'd of them, the abominable *Principles* and *Practices* that at this day reign among us. And

And here alas! We ſhall find Men, whoſe very *Principles* give encouragement to all manner of Wickedneſs and Impiety by reſolving the Whole of a Chriſtian into a ſtrong Faith: So that, if they can but believe themſelvrs to be of the Number of thoſe, *that are deliver'd from the wrath to come*, all the *Abominations* they can be guilty of, ſhall be no Bar to their Entrance into *the Kingdom of God*, whereby they do in effect ſay with the *Jews*, in the 10th v. of this ch. *We are deliver'd to do* (or tho we have done) *all theſe Abominations*. Theſe are Preſumptions with a witneſs. But there is ſtill another ſort of hardned Sinners, that alſo ſhamefully abound, *who* do *even deny the Lord that bought them*. Who, tho' they pretend to worſhip one God, yet own him not in that manner wherein he has diſcover'd himſelf, denying indeed all *Revelation*, and conſequently the whole Oeconomy of our *Redemption*: To whom all the Sacred Myſteries of Religion, as Reveal'd in Scripture, are mere Nonſenſe, and the Doctrine of *three Perſons and one God*, a Subject fit only for Mirth and Ridicule. Good God! that we ſhould live to ſee the whole Platform of our future Happineſs, wherein thoſe adorable Attributes, thy Power, thy Wiſdom, thy Juſtice, thy Mercy are ſo viſibly diſplay'd, ſo contemptuouſly trampled on and expoſed.

Wicked Principles and Opinions.

1 Theſſ. 1. 10.

2 Pet. 2. 1.

The firſt Charge I mention'd againſt the *Iſraelites* was their heinous Sin of *Idolatry*: which poſſibly I may run the hazard of being judged a falſe Accuſer, ſhould I go about to fix on this Nation, whoſe withdrawing its ſelf from the *Romiſh Communion* was chiefly upon account of its Idolatrous Practices; a Sin not univerſally and directly charged on them neither; tho' their *Doctrines* and their *Doings* that way tending are ſo ſcandalous and ſuſpicious, that we could not think ourſelves ſafe or ſecure enough without fleeing from the very *Appearance* of it. And therefore perhaps it may look very ſtrange to

charge *Idolatry* upon any of that People, who have ſhewed themſelves ſo zealous againſt it.

Idolatry. And yet, after all, if ſetting up a God of our own framing be *Idolatry*, we need not mention the reſting in mere outward Obſervances and Shadows of Religion, the placing it in hearing Sermons without practice, the not worſhipping God after a due manner, not yielding a juſt Veneration to Sacred *Perſons* and *Places*, making Religion ſerve to evil Purpoſes, loving the Pomps and Vanities of this wicked World; tho' all theſe are no leſs than ſeveral Degrees of it; yet, I ſay, we need not mention any ſuch to prove the guilt of this Sin among us: Since we have alas! To many, that will not be content with any *God* but of their own making. And therefore, if we tell them of a *God* that will one day call them to an Account for the Wickedneſs of their Lives, and that for theſe ſhort moments of Pleaſure, there is an Eternity of Miſery awaits them hereafter, they ſhall but laugh at us for our pains, and alledge that it is inconſiſtent with not only the *Mercy* but the *Juſtice* alſo of an *Infinite Being*, in whom we own *both thoſe Attributes* to be in the higheſt Perfection, to deal thus with his Creatures.

Firſt, they look upon it as irreconcileable with his *Mercy*, ſince they cannot believe that an *All-merciful God* would make any thing to damn it. Never conſidering that the very Superiority of our Nature above others conſiſts in having the *Liberty of Choice and the Uſe of Reaſon*, that by comparing one thing with another, we may *know how to refuſe the Evil and chuſe the Good*, Iſa. 7. 15. which plainly makes Damnation our own Act, not *God*'s: Nor ſo much as giving any Credit to what follows; namely, that, when, by making a wrong Choice, we had abandon'd ourſelves over to the Power of him, who deluded us into it, yet *God* notwithſtanding contrived

ſuch

ſuch excellent means to *recover us out of his Snare*, and ſupplied us with ſuch gracious Aſſiſtances to regain the Ground we had loſt, that nothing, but our own Wilfulneſs and Obſtinacy ſtill, can make us miſerable: Which is the fartheſt that *Infinite Mercy* joyned with *Infinite Wiſdome* can extend.

But then, Secondly, they hold it likewiſe inconſiſtent with his *Juſtice* to puniſh *Temporal* Sins with *Eternal* Torments. Wherein they as little conſider, that thoſe, whom God ſo puniſhes, have ſinned as long as they are able, and that they Sin not to Eternity is wholy owing to the condition of their Nature, ſince, if that were Infinite, ſo would their Sins be likewiſe. And yet, that theſe are the only Sinners that are *eternally Damn'd*, is plain, becauſe *at what time ſoever the Wicked turns from all the Sins that he hath committed* (tho' even at the lateſt hour of his Life) by ſuch ſteady reſolutions of forſaking them, as, ſhould God renew him a Leaſe of it, he could never be *wilfully* betrayed into the Breach of them again, *he ſhall ſave his Soul alive*. Doubtleſs this is never the ſubject either of their *Conſideration* or *Belief*: For, if it were, it muſt needs be likewiſe abundantly ſufficient to clear Almighty God from the leaſt Imputation of *Injuſtice*. Ezek. 18. 27.

But, if to frame a God with *Attributes* only ſuitable to their own Notions of *Mercy* and *Juſtice*, ſuch as may conſiſt with a Liberty to live as they liſt, and to wallow in ſuch *Bruitiſh ſenſuality*, as did generally accompany the *Heatheniſh Idolatry*, which is the reaſon that the Apoſtle, according to Dr. *Hammond*'s Notion of the word Πλεονεξία gives it that Name: If ſuch an Idea of God, as will ſuffer them to indulge themſelves in the fouleſt and moſt beaſtial Sins, upon an Opinion that it is inconſiſtent witn his *Mercy* and *Juſtice* to puniſh them eternally for it: If this, I ſay, be *Idolatry*, as I think we have Col. 3. 5. See *Ham.* on Rom. 1. 29. 1 Cor. 5. 10.

have but too juſt reaſon to account it; then we may conclude that we want not thoſe, who are as notoriouſly Guilty, as the *Jews* of Old: Since it is at leaſt as groſs and abſurd to make a *God*, that can quietly behold all manner of Sin without puniſhing it, which is in effect to approve, at leaſt not to diſapprove of it, as it is to form a *God* of Wood or Stone, that cannot puniſh it by reaſon it neither ſees it, nor is ſenſible of it.

Atheiſm. And now, if we are as bad as they already, what ſhall we be, when we have diſcover'd others, that believe *no God at all*, that will own no ſuch Thing as an *Immaterial Being*, that deny therefore that there is any thing within us of a different Nature from this *Corporeal Fabrick*. And yet, that there are ſuch, appears by one, who, on his "uſual calling on God to damn him in his common "Diſcourſe, being asked whether he were in *earneſt* or "not, when he uſed thoſe words, anſwered that *Jeſt* or "*Earneſt* was all one, ſince he did not believe there was "any thing in his Compoſition, that was capable of it: As we have it atteſted by a very Ingenious Perſon in his *Phyſico-Theological Letters*. But let us beſeech Thee, O Lord, to enlighten the Eyes of all ſuch Miſcreants in *this Life*, that they may ſee their wretched miſtake, time enough to prevent a too ſad and terrible Coviction of it in the *next*.

a One of the Aſſembly of Divines ſpeaking *of the Superſtition, Hereſy, and Profaneneſs, they had Covenanted to extirpate*, takes notice of no leſs than 180 *Hereſies, that were at that time propagated in this Nation* (whereof, if there were ſo many, I doubt we may e'en thank thoſe of his own Stamp for being the occaſion, by ſo miſerably rending this poor *Church* in pieces as they did.) Among which he menti-

a *Tho. Caſes* Model of Spiritual Thankfulneſs before the *Houſe of Commons*, Feb. 19. 1645. p. 24.

ons

ons *the Divinity of Christ and the Holy Ghost question'd by some, deny'd by others; and that there wanted not such as asserted the Mortality of the Soul.* Of the former of these 'twere to be wished there were not too many in our days. And of the latter [b] A. Bp. *Laud* in his *Answer to the Lord* Say's *Speech* gives this Account; "there were some then "Living, who, tho' they durst not speak "it out in all Companies, did yet cun- "ningly insinuate that at Death the Soul "and Body were extinct together, but "rise again at the Resurrection. It seems such monstrous Errors did not then appear bare-fac'd: tho' he might possibly see this made publick afterwards, it appearing in Print [c] a little before his Death. But even those were more rational than our *Modern Moralists* (if I may be allow'd to use that *Term*) their Opinion supposing an after Compensation of Deeds whether Good or Evil, that meet not with their Reward here: Whereas *these* remove every thing out of their way, that may curb or restrein them from committing the vilest enormities in *this* World, by expecting never to be called to an Account for them in *another*.

b History of A. B. *Laud's* Troubles and Tryal, Published by Mr. *Wharton*.

Tho' this is but an old *Heresy* revived: For *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. Lib. 6. c. 37.* tells us of some in *Arabia* —— Οἱ ἔλεγον τὴν ἀνθρωπείαν ψυχὴν τέως μὲν κατὰ τὸν ἐνεστῶτα καιρὸν ἅμα τῇ τελευτῇ συναποθνήσκειν, καὶ συνδιαφθείρεσθαι. αὖθις δέ ποτε κατὰ τὸν τῆς ἀναστάσεως καιρὸν σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀναβιώσεσθαι. Who said that the Soul of Man at the very instant of his departure dies and perishes together with the Body, and shall hereafter return to Life with it again at the day of Resurrection.

c The Mortality of the Soul by *R. O.* Printed in the Year, 1644.

So that where we find such *Principles*, we need not be to seek for *Practices* answerable to them, or indeed for any of that black Catalogue of Sins, which we drew out of the two Prophets against the *Jews*. For, alas! what should hinder such from stealing, from using any sinister ways of defrauding their Neighbours, from Extortion, from down-right Violence, where they are powerful enough, or some false pretence of Right, where they

Wickedness and Immorality.

they are not; from seeking to attain Honor or Riches by any unlawful means, &c. What should restrain them from gratifying their *sensual Lusts*, from heightning them by pampering their Bodies, from inflaming them by Intemperance and Excess? What indeed can withhold them from any kind of Sin whatsoever, that they are in the least tempted to, either by *Profit* or *Pleasure*, or even an *Itch of boasting and glorying* in their Wickedness, that we may see what Men of *Courage* and *Bravery* they are, how they can bid defiance to all manner of Fear or Danger of any after-reckoning.

Hence proceed those daring Sins of *Profaning God's Holy Name* by *Blasphemy*, *common Swearing*, *despising his Holy Word*, and those he has set a-part for the *Dispensing* of it, slighting all we can urge to Reform them, and endeavour to put *Goodness* and *Piety* out of countenance by Scoffing at all that is *Sacred*. By which means, I am afraid, it happens, that we find a great many, who have some secret Veneration for *Virtue*, and make Profession of the same Religion with us, from the contagious Influence of such sad Examples, most scandalously blaspheming God by their wicked Lives.

Indeed how many are there, who come to Church, and vouchsafe us the Hearing, while we are reproving *Vice*, that can yet be guilty of many of the Sins above-mention'd, not scrupling to pass over any thing, that stands in the way of their *Covetousness* or *Ambition*. If they can but get *Wealth* or *Honor*, no matter by what means, whether by lying or Arts of Deceit in buying or selling; by exacting on the Necessities of others; by giving or taking of *Bribes*, by ruining their Neighbours Reputation, or endeavouring to supplant him by any under-hand dealing or even *Perjury* it self. The very naming whereof, brings me to the last Sin I mention'd,

that

that haſten'd God's Vengeance on *Jeruſalem* (for 'tis more than time I ſhould have done with this Head, which I could heartily wiſh I had not too much reaſon to be ſo large upon) and may put us upon conſidering whether we have not likewiſe too many *Zedekiah's* among us, that bear but little regard to the *Oath* they have taken to the *King*, under whoſe Government we are now (bleſſed be God) fully ſettled in a *ſafe*, and, we hope, a *Laſting Peace*. Now if we are no leſs guilty of their abominable Impieties, and have that Sin withall lurking among us, that was the immediate Cauſe of bringing that Captivity upon them; then it is high time for us to conſider in the next place, Perjury.

From the dreadful Effects of their Wickedneſs, what may we juſtly expect ſhould befall us, if we perſiſt with our no leſs heinous Provocations to incenſe the *Majeſty of Heaven* againſt us? Which was the Second thing I deſir'd might be conſider'd.

Suppoſe ye, ſaith our Saviour, *that thoſe* Galileans, *whoſe blood* Pilate *mingled with their Sacrifices, were Sinners above all the* Galileans, *becauſe they ſuffer'd ſuch things: or that thoſe eighteen, on whom the Tower of* Siloam *fell and ſlew them, were Sinners above all that dwell in* Jeruſalem? *I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh*, Luke 13. the firſt 5 Verſes. So, when the Apoſtle warns his *Corinthians* of what happen'd to the *Iſraelites* in their Paſſage out of *Egypt* into *Canaan* for their diſobedience, he tells them, *that with many of them God was not well pleas'd, for they were overthrown in the* Wilderneſs, 1 *Cor.* 10. 5. naming likewiſe in the Verſes following ſeveral other Judgments, that befell them for ſeveral Sins: and to let them know that ſuch Sins might juſtly expect the like Vengeance, he adds *v.* 11. *that all theſe things happen'd to them for Enſamples*

ſamples, and they are written for our Admonition, upon whom the ends of the World are come.

I think I have made it appear that our Sins are ſo far from *coming ſhort* of theirs, that they ſeem in many reſpects to *exceed* them. All our hopes are, that we are not ſo *univerſally* wicked, that there are ſome *Phineas's* ſtill left, that may hinder the *Progreſs* of this *Profaneneſs* and *Immorality* ſo rife among us; nay, that, God be-thanked, we have a *Moſes to ſtand in the Gap*; a Prince, whoſe endeavour to put a ſtop to this torrent of Wickedneſs ready to overwhelm us, will, we hope, meet with its deſir'd Succeſs; and the Zeal, he ſhews for *God's Honor*, prevail with *Heaven* to avert thoſe Judgments, we have otherwiſe all the reaſon in the World to expect, becauſe we have ſo juſtly deſerv'd them.

Which all among you, who have any regard for the *Glory* and *Service* of Almighty God, and obſerve how *both of them* are ſlighted and deſpiſed, cannot but be ſufficiently ſenſible of: And that therefore, if God ſhould in Anger remove thoſe, who for the preſent *ſtay his deſtroying Arm*, nothing could be expected but unavoidable ruin and deſtruction.

How much therefore do all, that are duly apprehenſive of theſe things, ſtand engag'd to add themſelves to their number, that there may never fail a Generation of Men, that by their Zeal to *ſuppreſs Wickedneſs*, and the powerful Oratory of their *Prayers and Tears* may intercept the *Calamities* that would otherwiſe befall us. Which brings me to

The third and laſt Thing I propoſed to your Conſideration, namely, how much it concerns us, both by our own *Repentance and our beſt endeavour to reclaim others*, to prevent thoſe *Judgments*, that will otherwiſe moſt certainly overtake us.

Which

Which happy *End*, if *Claudian's Regis ad exemplum* be true, there was never a clearer Proſpect of attaining, than at this preſent. We have already liv'd to ſee what Influence a *Prince's Life* can have on his *Subjects*. I wiſh the *Effects* thereof were not ſtill too *viſible*. But the being convinced of this by our own Experience gives us ſtill the *fairer* hopes, that we may once again ſee the *Power* and *Efficacy* of ſo great an *Example* to *nobler Purpoſes*: That inſtead of that *Luxury and Voluptuouſneſs*, that has of late Years infected the Land, we may begin to be ſeaſoned with *better Principles* from an Imitation of our *preſent King*: Whoſe *Example does* not only ſhew it *feaſible, and will*, we hope, render it *faſhionable*, but his *Reſolutions* likewiſe to *Countenance Piety and Vertue, and Diſcourage Wickedneſs and Vice*, make it ſtill more *eligible* to be *good* and *virtuous* upon the ſcore of Men's Intereſt in *this* World, which is but too generally purſued with the greateſt eagerneſs. Reformation.

And that I may ſhew you what farther encouragement we have for the ſetting our hands to this deſirable *Reformation*, let me obſerve to you another Cauſe of the *Looſeneſs and Immorality* of the Age: Namely, the *Principles* of ſome *late Philoſophers*, greedily imbib'd by ſeveral, who thought it an Accompliſhment to have ſo much ſmattering that way, that they might be able to chatter in *Philoſophical Terms*; and the falling in of theſe *Principles* with the Gratification of their *Luſts* gave them ſtill the greater Reliſh. To which tho' we cannot but own the mighty Intereſt of *Atheiſm and Irreligion*: Yet, we ſee, *Almighty God*, that he might not *leave himſelf without any Witneſs* among the *Inquirers* into *Nature*, and that our *Horizon* might not be quite darkned by ſuch a black cloud as was over-ſpreading the Face of it, has rais'd ſome bright *Lumi-*

naries, that have not only ſet *Nature* in a clearer Light, and made her *glorifie* and *proclaim her Author*; but ſome of them, as if they were deſirous to retreive the Credit of their *Profeſſion*, and make amends for the *Diſhonor*, *God and Religion* have ſuffered by ſeveral, that were eminent in it, have likewiſe vindicated the Cauſe of *Revealed Religion*, not enduring to ſee the *Holy Scriptures* become the ſport and May-game of ſuch as would endeavour with their little Wit and Raillery to make them guilty of Nonſenſe and Contradiction. So that now, God be thanked, we find even the *Phyſician's Religion*, to be true and Orthodox, and that there are thoſe now among *them*, to whom the Doctrine of a *Cru-*
1 Cor. 1. 23. *cified Saviour* does not appear, as of old *to the Greeks*, and of late to too many among us, *Fooliſhneſs*; but as it is to thoſe, who are Chriſtians indeed, *the Power and Wiſdom of God*.

Let us all reſolve unanimouſly to become *Champions* in this *Cauſe*. The *Defence* whereof muſt begin in the *Reforming* ourſelves, and taking care that no body be able to charge us with any thing that may diſcredit it. For there is certainly nothing that weakens the *Cauſe* of *Religion* more, or gives greater occaſion to the Adverſaries thereof to contemn and *blaſpheme it*, than to ſee ſuch, as would ſeem its moſt zealous Aſſertors, let their *Practice* run directly counter to the *Precepts* it enjoins:

Hor. de Art. Poet. *Nam dicentis erunt fi factis abſona dicta,*
If our Actions give our Tongues the lye,
Romani tollent Equites Peditesq; cachinnum.
We ſhall be ſo far from convincing any of the Reality of what we Profeſs, that we ſhall but make ourſelves the ſubject of their ſcorn and laughter. Whereas, if they ſee the force and Power of our *Arguments* in our *Lives*,

and

and that we do not offer with the *Phariſees to lay ſuch Burthens on them, that we will not touch ourſelves*, they will then judge us to be in earneſt, and look upon us as perſons, that *believe* what we *affirm*. Then may we boldly venture on that great Work of *reforming others*; and hope to gain Authority to what we ſay. Then would *Wickedneſs* not appear ſo bare-faced, nor *Profaneneſs* dare to ſupport it ſelf by that, which has of late uſurp'd the Reputation of Wit, Namely, the *ſcoffing and deriding all that is Virtuous and Sacred*.

If there be Men of good *Natural Endowments*, that employ their *Parts* this way, if there be ſuch, as are really witty and ingenious, that are withall very lewd and *Atheiſtical*, the more's the Pity. But, bleſſed be God, there are likewiſe ſuch *Gentlemen* among us, that are every way, *at leaſt*, as accompliſhed as they, wanting no Wit to recommend them to Converſation, who are alſo at the ſame time Friends to *Religion*, and highly concerned to ſee any endeavour to droll it out of countenance.

'Tis true, there is, for the moſt part, an *innate Modeſty*, that attends *Goodneſs*, which as this decays, uſually wears off, ſo that *Lewdneſs* is generally ſtocked with Confidence enough, which, in the way of Raillery often paſſing for Wit, clearly triumphs over the other: And by this means the *Modeſt Man* is frequently diſcouraged from venturing on the vindication of *Goodneſs* againſt ſo much *Confidence* and *Aſſurance*; eſpecially when perhaps there may be none elſe in Company to to ſide with him therein.

Now, I dare ſay, would ſuch *Men of Parts*, as have withall a due Senſe of *Religion*, labour to overcome this *Diſcouragement*, by plucking up a good Spirit, and joyntly agreeing among themſelves to make *Atheiſm* and

and *Profaneneſs* ſo far the ſubject of their *Mirth*, as where ever they meet with it, to ridicule and expoſe it: Which, I doubt not but there thoſe that can do, with as much *facetiouſneſs and pleaſantry*, as they pretend to, who employ it againſt *God and Religion*: If this, I ſay, were but done as often as opportunities offer themſelves, it might ſoon be jeered into corners and made aſhamed to ſhew its head, and ſo by degrees in a little time be quite laugh'd out of the World.

We find there are few, if any, of theſe *Atheiſtical Scoffers*, that ſo often wound our Ears with their *Profane Jeſts*, that, when they come to dye, can forbear crying out *Lord be merciful*: Who yet would look upon us as very barbarous and ſevere, ſhould we then
1 Kin. 18. 27. *ſarcaſtically* beſpeak them in the Language of *Elijah to Baal's Prieſts: Cry aloud, for he is a God. Peradventure he ſleepeth and muſt be awaked.* And yet it would be no more than what they juſtly deſerve, who have all their Life time ſo abuſed him, as if they thought he were indeed a-ſleep and heard them not; or rather as if they did not believe there were any ſuch Being at all.

If we could by this or any other means ſuppreſs the growth of ſuch monſtrous *Wickedneſs*, we ſhould hope we were in a fair way to appeaſe the Wrath of a provoked God. but if ſomething more were not yet done, we ſhould not be altogether without fear, that *his*
Iſ. 9. 12. *Anger is not quite turned away, but his hand is ſtretched out ſtill.*

I have already told you, that the immediate occaſion of the *Jews* Overthrow was *Zedekiah's* breaking the
Perjury. *Oath* he had taken to the *King of Babylon*. And, unleſs ſeveral among us, that have *Sworn Allegiance to his preſent Majeſty*, who has hitherto ſo ſignally protected them, even in ſpite of their teeth, and their ungrate-

ful

ful endeavours to ruin his Deſigns, forbear to trifle any longer with ſo *Sacred a Thing* as an *Oath*; we have cauſe to expect, that God may enter into Judgment with this *Nation*, even for that *crying Sin*. For *Sedition* and *Treachery* do naturally tend to the Ruin of the *Innocent* as well as of the *Guilty*; and ſo long as ſuch turbulent and unquiet Spirits reign among us, we can never be ſecure. How far the *Innocent* may ſuffer with the *Guilty*, is not eaſie to foreſee. However I wiſh they, who are this way Guilty, could prevail with themſelves to conſider what a dreadful hazard they run, and how certain a *Judgment* they are drawing on their own heads, from the Example of *God*'s terrible Vengeance on *Zedekiah*, whereof I have before given an Account; and whoſe *Violation* of his *Oath God Almighty* did eſteem as a *breach of Covenant* againſt himſelf. *Seeing he deſpiſed the Oath by breaking the Covenant, when lo! he had given his Hand, and hath done all theſe things, he ſhall not eſcape. Therefore thus ſaith the Lord God, as I live, ſurely my Oath that he hath deſpiſed, and my Covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompence upon his own head*, Ezek. 17. 18. 19.

And as for thoſe who ſtill refuſe to take an *Oath* to our *gracious Sovereign*, tho' he has been ſo long *eſtabliſhed in a quiet Poſſeſſion of the Throne*; I ſhall only direct them to the *Advice* of thoſe that were in *Captivity* to their Brethren that were left behind at *Jeruſalem*, Baruch 1. 11. 12. *Pray for the life of* Nebuchadonoſar *King of* Babylon, *and for the life of* Balthaſar *his Son, that their days may be upon the Earth as the days of Heaven. And the Lord give us ſtrength and lighten our Eyes, and we ſhall live under the ſhadow of* Nebuchadonoſor *King of* Babylon, *and under the ſhadow of* Balthaſar, *his Son, and we ſhall ſerve them many days,* Diſobedience.

and

and find favour in their sight. Now, if they should not only *serve that King*, but think themselves obliged to *pray for his long Life* too, we have no Reason to imagine that they made the least scruple of *plighting their Faith* to him, even tho' they could not look upon him as their *Rightful* King in these Men's *Notion* of that *Word.*

I shall add no more with respect to the many other Sins I mention'd, whereby we have incurr'd the Wrath of *Almighty God:* but shall beseech him to enlighen all our Eyes that we may *see in this our day the Things that belong to our Peace:* And consider, that, if ever we hope to become a flourishing People, it must be *by fearing the Lord and the King, and not medling with those, that are given to change: By not swearing deceitfully:* By being zealous for the Honor of *God*, and *of the Son of God our Saviour*; promoting the *Interest* and *Power* of *Religion* in our *several Stations*, by our *Example*, by our *Authority*, by our *friendly Advice and Admonition*, and sweetly insinuating it into the Minds of others in the most engaging and winning manner we can think of.

Luke 19. 42.

Pro. 4. 21. Ps. 24. 4.

In a word, it must be by endeavouring with joynt hands and heart to advance the *Honor* and *Welfare* of our *Nation*, by working *Righteousness* and following after *Peace*; which the Lord has promis'd by his Prophet shall be the Product thereof. *The Work of Righteousness*, saith he, *shall be Peace; and the effect of Righteousness Quietness and Assurance for ever.* It is indeed this alone that can *exalt a Nation*; *but Sin*, as it is *the Reproach*, so it will be the Ruin *of any People.*

Is. 32. 17.

Prov. 14. 34.

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